

STARBASE Wisconsin's First Alumni Class Graduated from High School - May 2019

May 2019 marks the Senior Year of High School for STARBASE Wisconsin's first graduating class. Fifth grade students from Milwaukee Public School's (MPS) Westside Academy attended the Wisconsin program seven years ago when it opened in 2012. Kimberly Isberner, one of the first 5th grade teachers to attend STARBASE, values the program, "I thoroughly enjoy bringing my students to STARBASE because they learn STEM concepts through hands-on experience, genuinely look forward to coming each week, and continue talking about their experience afterwards. I wish there was a way I could bring my 5th graders every year, but as word spread about this excellent opportunity it became harder to attend with the number of schools in MPS." Milwaukee has over 224 Elementary Schools.

Shawanda Blackmon is pictured below (right) while a STARBASE student in 2012. She is holding her team's seat for an egg that serves as a space shuttle passenger. She is pictured (left) as she accepts her high school diploma from Ms. Gonzalez-Edwards, Riverside University High School Principal.



During the academy, educators and guest speakers emphasize the importance to

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finish high school and becoming a productive citizen. One-hundred Seventy-seven youth attended Wisconsin's program in the first school year. The national STARBASE model uses high school graduation rates as a milestone marker to measure the program's impact and progress as they serve the community. Twenty-eight percent of the 2012 STARBASE Wisconsin Alumni class graduated from Milwaukee Public High Schools and an additional nine percent are still enrolled in high school.

Westside Academy Alumni include the Wisconsin program's first graduate, Shawanda Blackmon. Ms. Isberner, her teacher at Westside Academy, stated "Shawanda was a hardworking and inquisitive student who benefited from attending the STARBASE program." Shawanda graduated from Riverside University School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As a high schooler, she was active serving her peers as a Specialty Advisor on Student Council in which she assisted council officers in fulfilling their roles.

She also participated in several sports including Basketball, Softball, and Volleyball. Chloe Black, her high school basketball coach, highly regards her, "Shawanda maintained a positive attitude throughout the entire season. Regardless of the obstacle that presented itself's in practice or during game time, she always remained optimistic! That is one thing that I appreciated! I am wishing her the best of luck in her journey."

Shawanda plans to attend Marian University in Wisconsin and major in Nursing. She earned two academic scholarships for completing her undergraduate studies. Her goal is to work in pediatric nursing. "[STARBASE] made science fun to learn," Blackmon said. "I didn't really have an interest in science before attending STARBASE."



The mission badge of the first school to graduate as designed by the students.



Shawanda and her classmates create engineering designs in 2012.